

Building the Collaboration Necessary to Support Regional Rural Innovation

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Addressing Secretary Johanns' Challenge:

“Toward a Regional Rural
Innovation Policy . . .”

**Policies are ultimately about
visions and values.**

**So several questions should
frame our approach to this
issue:**

- What are the principal policy goals of rural initiatives and farm programs?
- Who are the constituencies of each, and how are they benefited by public investments?
- Since almost all producers are rural people, why have these programs historically been viewed as inherently competitive or contradictory?

A Word About Current Rural Conditions and Trends:

- If you live in a rural area, you know!
- Comments:
 - The past is prologue.
 - Trend lines are clear.
 - Tinkering around the edges is not the answer!

“If you do the same things,

over

and

over,

you’ll probably get the same
outcomes!”

Four Key Questions for Rural Policy Change:

1. Why should America care?
2. Can a meta-policy shift occur?
3. What are the key elements in such a shift?
4. Where are the current and future opportunities for such an approach?

Why Should America Care?

- Structural challenges in rural community and economic development capacity:
 - Current federal policy
 - Foundation grantmaking
 - Corporate grantmaking

A New Policy: Regional Rural Innovation

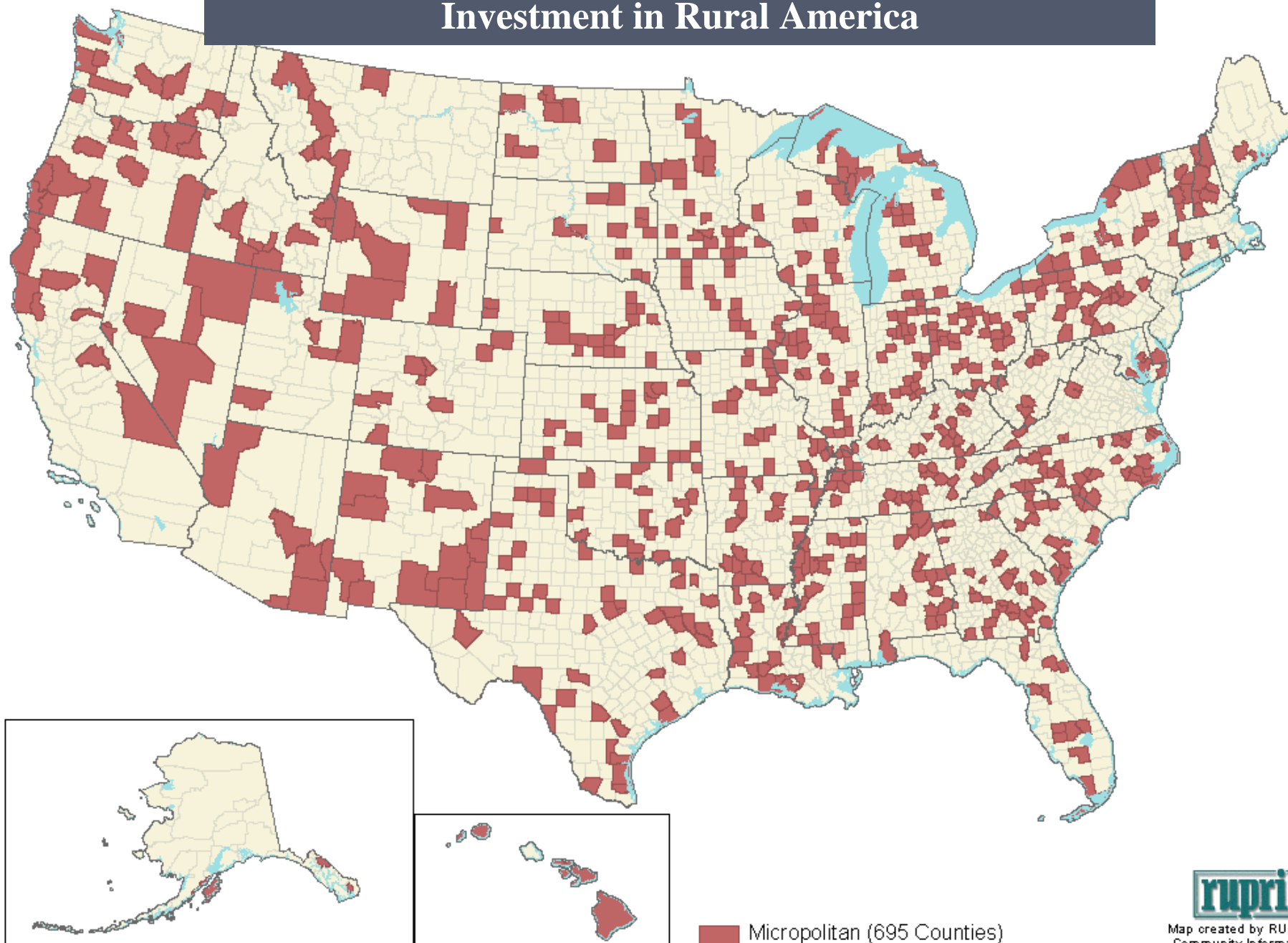
- Economic regions will drive global competitiveness determinations.
- Competitiveness will be based on unique regional assets.
- Innovation and entrepreneurship, both public and private, are keys in leveraging these assets to capture competitive advantage.

- **Three questions will determine the future:**
 - Will public sector champion(s) step up?
 - Will institutional innovator(s) accept the challenge of building new intermediary structures?
 - Can a constituency for change be built, to support these public risk-takers?

The New Goal: Capturing regional competitive advantage

- Leveraging unique assets: the rural “added-value”
- Regional “Declarations of Interdependence” – met/nonmet connections
- Innovation / entrepreneurship / collaboration / new governance
- Summing to local regional competitiveness

Micropolitan Areas: An Opportunity for Targeted Investment in Rural America



Source: Micropolitan Areas - U.S. Census Bureau and Office of Management and Budget, December 2003.



Map created by RUPRI's
Community Information
Resources Center

The Appropriate Policy Question:

- “What policy framework will best integrate rural initiatives and farm programs, to advantage producers, their rural communities and regions, and their childrens’ opportunities to thrive there in the 21st Century?”

A new rural policy should:

- Acknowledge current ag policy has many goals, but has failed to adequately assure broad-based rural economic growth
- Build innovative new regional approaches for global competition
- Support necessary institutional innovation
- Assist in easing current agricultural trade conflicts